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ABSTRACT

This report described a program to improve student writing ability. The targeted population consisted of first and third grade students in a middle class community, located in the Midwest. The problem of inadequate writing and the results of the interventions were documented. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked positive experience with literacy-related activities. The data stated students would not become effective writers without guidance. Reviewed curricula content and instructional strategies revealed appropriate assessment alternatives that moved away from traditional testing to a portfolio system. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with a review of the problem setting, resulted in the following interventions: process writing was used effectively in the primary grades, students found pleasure in writing when there was a purpose, teachers modeled writing and not just assigned work, and portfolio development helped instructional strategies, learning, and assessment. Post intervention data indicated an increase in the students' use of grammar and vocabulary. Student improvements also increased in self-editing skills and attitudes toward writing. Appendixes contain survey instruments, teacher and student writing performance and self-editing checklists, brief summaries of 4 books and a video, and a blank award certificate. (Contains 66 references and 45 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING STUDENT WRITING ABILITY THROUGH THE USE OF TEACHER INTERVENTIONS

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Jackie Gouty
Sandy Lid

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Skylight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2002

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Post intervention data indicated an increase in the students' use of grammar and vocabulary. Student improvements also increased in self-editing skills and attitudes toward writing.

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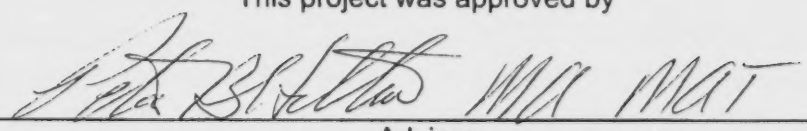

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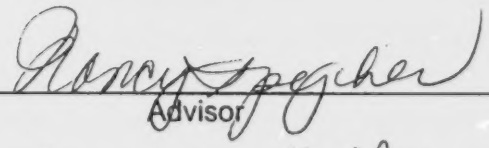

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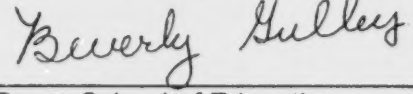

Dean, School of Education

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my husband Gerry, and my two sons, Justin and Jack, who never stopped believing in me, supporting me, and whose smiles kept me going. I love you with all my heart.

In loving memory of my father, with all my love, who gave me the honor of being his daughter, and who would be proud of all my accomplishments.

To my partner Sandy with whom this would not be possible. She made this paper a pleasurable, exciting and laughter filled experience. Your dedication and determination for perfection is amazing. Thank you!

Jackie

To my children, Amanda and Christopher, who never cease to amaze me with their sense of humor and endless spirit. Without them, my life would be empty.

To my family and friends who continue to be my support and my strength.

To my partner Jackie, who is my friend and my mentor, and without whom this would not have been possible. We laughed until we cried, and then we laughed some more. Thank you for the wonderful time.

And in loving memory of my parents, Jack and Gerry, who made me the person I am today. They taught me strength, courage, fairness, and dignity and for this I am eternally grateful.

Sandy

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Children in the targeted first and third grades do not demonstrate adequate writing ability. The need to improve writing skills is evident by classroom teacher observation, class participation, writing assessment, student journals, student writing samples, Daily Oral Language (D.O.L.) exercises, and portfolios.

Immediate Problem Context

Building Description

The site is a one school district. Classroom A and B are both located in this school. The targeted school is the only public kindergarten through eighth grade elementary school servicing the community. The original structure built in 1936 consisted of two rooms. Over the next twenty years, six additions were added to the original site, dividing the structure into an east building and a west building with an overpass connecting the two structures. Some of these improvements consisted of five classrooms on the ground floor, four-second story classrooms, a gym with stage, and a nurse's office in the east building. A speech room, home economics room, teacher's room, classroom for the educationally handicapped, an auditorium, and several primary classrooms make up the west building.

At present, the east building houses the District Administration Office, the main gym with stage, two-fourth grades, two-fifth grades, the music room, the PTA room, and the school board room. The second story contains the junior high (sixth–eighth grades, two of each), a library, one computer lab equipped with 25 computers, plus two printers, and an AVERKEY 3 Plus and external PC/MAC to television screen converter. It can convert computer images into video format and display them on the television monitor or large screen LCD projector. On the lower level of the east building is a wood shop area, the boiler room, a custodial office, and a before/after school care facility.

In the lower level of the west building is a multi-purpose/lunch room. On the main level are eight self-contained primary classrooms (K-3), an LD resource room, the Student Support Team coordinator's office, the counselor's room, a faculty work and supply room, the principal's office, and a kindergarten courtyard. Each primary classroom has a private restroom, a sink with drinking fountain attached, and carpeted floors. Each primary classroom is also equipped with two Apple II computers, one ViewSonic 15GA Internet accessed computer, and a printer. All west primary rooms have large windows that cover the east side.

The primary gym, with stage, is located on the second story of the west building, along with the art room, speech room, teacher's lounge, computer lab, a junior high science lab, and a junior high home economics lab. The home economics lab is divided into two rooms, sewing and cooking.

The school day is 8:20-3:09. Faculty day is 8:00-3:30. The day consists of eight-forty minute periods. Students are dismissed at 2:30 once a month for faculty meetings. Faculty meetings are 2:30-4:00. The basic curriculum is structured to include language arts, math, social studies, and science. Special areas include art, music, physical education, library, and computer

literacy. Required quarter courses for junior high are woodshop, home economics, music, and art.

Additional resources available to students are learning disability resource pullout programs, speech and language services, enrichment courses at lunch for students who need extra help, an after school homework program, and summer school targeted for at-risk students. Additional student programs offered are band, chorus, and sports. The school offers a 60-minute open campus lunch. Community involvement is incorporated through the following activities: D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness Resistance Education, PreD.A.R.E., G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training), Rainbows, the PTA sponsored "Reflections" writing program, student council, yearbook, and Paw Prints (the school newspaper). Our school has a very active PTA, which provides many activities for the students and their families.

Classroom A is located in the west building. The room contains approximately 20 desks arranged in three pods. Each group has a captain who is in charge of maintaining the group. The captain gets supplies, keeps track of the group's points, passes out, and collects papers. Groups are rewarded for appropriate behaviors, good manners, listening skills, ready position, and returning appropriate correspondence from home. These points are totaled at the end of each month and a pizza lunch is rewarded to the group with the most points. The groups are then switched. The east side of the room is completely covered by large windows. The south side of the room has a 'Let's Discover' bulletin board, an alphabet bulletin board, and a chalkboard. The north side of the room has a calendar and weather board, an 'All About Me' board, and a chalkboard. The positive and inviting atmosphere is displayed throughout the room showing student work, a birthday graph, many colorful posters, and theme-oriented decorations. There is a horseshoe table, a computer table, a 'Let's Discover" table, a storage table for student work in

progress, and an Apple II station. A private restroom, separate sink, drinking fountain, two Apple II computers, one Internet accessible computer, osculating fan, carpeted floor, storage area, and room library are some of the perks in this room.

Classroom B is located in the west building. The room contains approximately 20 desks arranged in three pods. Each group has a captain who is in charge of collecting and passing out papers. Groups are rewarded for appropriate behaviors, good manners, listening skills, ready position, and neat and completed work. These points are totaled at the end of each month and a pizza lunch is rewarded to that group. The east side of the room is completely covered by large windows, providing a light and airy feel. Bulletin boards cover the north and south sides of the room. Student mailboxes, Totally Terrific Me, and a compliment tree cover these boards. The positive atmosphere is displayed throughout the room showing student work, acceptance posters, a birthday graph, plants, books, and colorful worktables. A private restroom, a separate sink, drinking fountain, two Apple II computers, one Internet accessible computer, osculating fan, carpeted floors, and large storage areas are some of the perks in the room.

Student Demographics

The targeted school has a student population of 348 students, which encompasses grades kindergarten through eighth. The racial–ethnic breakdown is 69.0% White, 15.8% Black, 10.6% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and no Native Americans. The school is comprised of 0.6% low–income students and 0.0% Limited-English Proficient students. The attendance rate is 96.6% with student mobility at 8.5%. There is no chronic truancy. The average class size in kindergarten is 15.5, first grade–24.0, third grade–18.5, sixth grade–22.5, and eighth grade–20.0 (School Report Card, 2000).

Staff Demographics

The total number of teachers at this site is 25. There are eight aides in the primary grades and one aide in the junior high. The site has a student support team, which consist of a coordinator, counselor, learning disability resource teacher, and a speech/language educator. The site houses one superintendent and one principal. The gender breakdown is 86.5% female and 13.4% male. Forty-seven percent of the faculty has a master's degree. The racial–ethnic breakdown for the teachers is 100% white. The pupil to teacher ratio is 14.9:1. The average teaching experience is 16.3 years. The average teacher's salary is $45,832, while the average administrators salary is $87,694 (School Report Card, 2000).

The Surrounding Community

The one school district encompasses two square miles, including two different townships. The town has a population of 6,100. The district has a low mobility rate. Students walk, bike, or car pool. This low mobility rate enhances a one-hour open campus lunch period. The majority of students stay for lunch.

The average home is valued at $170,000. Eighty percent of the students live in a one-family dwelling. Twenty percent live in apartments. This 20% causes frequent change in residency.

This community is in a high industrial taxable area including many large chain stores and factories. The large nontaxable properties include two large hospitals.

The community shares many support programs with the district, like the G.M. Mentor Program. The village helps with school maintenance. The police department provides a D.A.R.E. and a PreD.A.R.E. Program. The community library provides special programs for children, speakers for adults, book exchanges, and summer reading programs. The park and

recreation facility provides students with athletic programs, crafts, dances, family get-togethers, and special activities for the "Just-in-Between" and senior citizens. The district is provided with many advantages because of its unique size and location.

National Context of Problem

The need for improving writing skills has caused concern at the state and national levels. Three probable causes are student apprehension toward writing, lack of time spent on writing, and teachers not being adequately trained to teach writing.

It is important to state that although writing is within the area of literacy, it is a young area of study and has been forgotten when considering the 3R's. Reading and writing are often considered to be synonymous and yet writing is often left out when approaching literacy. Because writing is such a new area of research, there is a lot to be done and investigated. We know more about learning how to read and learning how to do math than we do writing (National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, May 1995).

It has been found that children today may be having different experiences with writing. Although most primary teachers have been concerned with children's literacy, in the past the majority of the effort was spent helping children read rather that write (Chomsky, 1971; Sealy and Sealy and Millmore, 1979).

Writing requires the development of thinking skills, organizational skills, and grammar. All of these skills together requires a lot to time, practice, and administrative support. Dennis L. Peterson (1997) believes that in order to correct writing deficiencies among students, the administration needs to make decisions in writing instruction at all levels throughout the curriculum. This would require specific goals and objectives. This would require providing

teachers with sufficient, uninterrupted time for critiquing students' work. Finally, we need to find the importance of writing skills and look at how we have been teaching writing.

"Between the mid 1960's and late 1970's 'creative writing' appeared as a curricular issue in elementary schools because many students clearly were not being exposed to composition before high school" (Strice, Bertrand and Bertrand, 1995, p.213). Evidence has shown that students' writing performances throughout the disciplines have remained low and have not changed over time. Instructional experience is an example of one factor attributing to this. Another example has shown that student participation in writing activities is very limited (Applebee as cited in Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, and Woodside-Jiron, 2000).

The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy reports that schools need a greater diversity of teaching approaches. We need to recognize different writing practices, and we need to give students the opportunity to find their own connections with writing and real-world situations (June 1992).

Much of the Center's research dealing with improved educational practice, from kindergarten to adulthood, points to new strategies aimed at reducing educational failure and providing the nation with a more literate generation, able to cope with new demands on the work force. Skills in written expression are an absolute prerequisite, which deserve the support of community, business, and political leaders. The ability to communicate in spoken and written language is not an academic luxury; it is a key to economic and social success in a competitive society (May 1995).

Writing assessments are used to guide instruction and provide meaningful information regarding student progress. There is some conflict between public and private reasons for evaluation, which has caused educators to investigate other ways to evaluate. Educators and

critics are finding many problems with the use of format-based tests for assessing student outcomes. Wolf (as cited in Meisels, 1996) believes that school based assessments prevent students from becoming judges of their own work. Tests often show what children do not know, not what they know (Micklo, 1997).

Routman (1993) believes educators are teaching to take tests and produce good scores. Educators cannot equate good writing and reading progress with high test scores. Preoccupation with test scores harms teaching and takes away learning opportunities for students. Educators need to look beyond test scores to develop a well-rounded profile of students' achievements and abilities.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The children in the targeted first and third grades do not demonstrate adequate writing ability. This is evident through teacher observation, teacher and student assessment, student writing samples, D.O.L. (Daily Oral Language) exercises, and portfolios. Of the 25 students in the targeted first and third grade classes, 12 from each class were involved in a writing improvement program over a 16-week period. The 12 students were selected at random, starting with the beginning of the class list and selecting every other student.

In order to assess students' feelings about writing, a student-centered questionnaire was administered (Appendices A and B). In order to assess parental viewpoints on writing, a survey was given to the parents (Appendix C). A teacher and student writing performance checklist was used to record students' independent portfolio samples (Appendices D – G). The initial independent portfolio sample will be used to show a baseline for future comparison. The teacher, on a weekly basis, completed a Daily Oral Language assessment. This provided evidence of correct sentence structure and grammar usage.

Tables 1 through 4 show the results of a student-centered, self-assessment questionnaire. It was administered in September 2001 and was used to assess how students felt about writing. They provided the teacher with an understanding of the students' feelings about writing.

Table 1
Writing Questionnaire
Grade One
September 2001

	Always	Sometimes	Never
I like to write.	15	6	3
I find it easy to write.	11	7	6
I like to write in school.	14	3	7
I like to write at home.	19	2	3
I am proud of what I write.	16	5	3

Table 2
Writing Questionnaire
Grade Three
September 2001

	Always	Sometimes	Never
I like to write.	13	7	4
I find it easy to write.	15	8	1
I think writing is important.	15	5	4
I like to write at school.	8	13	3
I like to write at home.	14	3	7
I am proud of what I write.	20	3	1
I am good at putting my ideas on paper.	12	8	4
Writing helps me tell what I learned.	19	5	0
I am able to revise my writing.	14	8	2
I write different types of stories.	17	5	2

Table 1 showed that of the questions asked, 62.5% of the students responded always, 25% sometimes, and 12.5% never to the statement "I like to write." Also, to the statement "I find it easy to write," 46% responded always, 29% sometimes, and 25% never. Finally, to the

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statement "I like to write in school," 58% responded always, 13% sometimes, and 29% never. Table 2 showed that of the questions asked, 54% responded always, 29% sometimes, and 17% never to the statement "I like to write." Also, to the statement "I find it easy to write," 62.5% responded always, 33.4% sometimes, and 4.16% never. Next, of the statement "I like to write in school," 33% responded always, 54% sometimes, and 13% responded never. Finally, 50% responded always, 33% sometimes, and 17% never to the statement "I am good at putting my ideas on paper."

Table 3
Writing Questionnaire
Grade One
September 2001

	a good writer	an ok writer	a poor writer
What kind of writer do you think you are?	14	7	3

Table 4
Writing Questionnaire
Grade Three
September 2001

	A great writer	a good writer	an average writer	a poor writer
What kind of writer do you think you are?	12	10	0	2

Table 3 and 4 asked the students what kind of writer they feel they are. In the targeted first grade class, the students responded as follows: 58% felt they are good writers, 29% felt they are ok writers, and 13% felt they are poor writers. In the targeted third grade class, the students responded as follows: 50% felt they are great writers, 42% felt they are good writers, 0% felt they are an average writer, and 8% felt they are a poor writer.

The writing questionnaire was given to both the targeted first and third grades in early September. Students in first grade were given a crayon, while students in third grade were given

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a highlighter to color in the faces that represent how they feel about writing. Each question was heard orally and a description of each smiley face was given. Smiley faces were drawn on the board to help the students follow. The smiley face represents "always," the straight face represents "sometimes," and a frown face represents "never." These directions were repeated after each question. Tables 1 through 3 provide an understanding of how the students in the targeted first and third grades feel about writing. A questionnaire will be given in January 2002 to compare the data.

Tables 5 and 6 show the results of a parent survey. It was given to the parents in September 2001. The survey was used to help understand the importance of writing at home.

Table 5
Parent Survey
Grade One
September 2001

	Yes	No	Sometimes
My child writes at home for pleasure.	7	1	8
I write at home for pleasure.	5	3	8
I read what my child writes.	15	1	0
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	5	1	10
We share what we write.	11	2	3
I make corrections on my children's writing.	10	1	5
I feel my child likes to write.	10	1	5
I think my child is a good writer.	9	1	6
I think writing is important.	16	0	0
I encourage my child to write at home.	14	2	0

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Table 6
Parent Survey
Grade Three
September 2001

	Yes	No	Sometimes
My child writes at home for pleasure.	9	2	10
I write at home for pleasure.	4	8	9
I read what my child writes.	21	0	0
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	5	4	12
We share what we write.	14	1	6
I make corrections on my children's writing.	12	2	7
I feel my child likes to write.	11	4	6
I think my child is a good writer.	12	4	5
I think writing is important.	21	0	0
I encourage my child to write at home.	16	1	4

Table 5 and 6 show the results of the parents' feelings about writing. Table 5 showed that of the targeted first grade parents surveyed, 44% felt their child wrote at home for pleasure, 50% felt sometimes, and 6% felt their child did not. Next, to the statement, "We write stories, letters, etc. together," 31% responded yes, 63 % responded sometimes, and 6% responded no. Also, 56% of the parents felt their child was a good writer, 38% felt sometimes their child was, and 6% felt their child was not. One hundred percent of the parents felt that writing is important. Finally, when asked about encouraging their child to write at home, 87% felt they do, 0% felt sometimes they do, and 13% felt they do not.

Table 6 showed that of the targeted third grade parents surveyed, 43% felt their child wrote at home for pleasure, 48% felt sometimes, and 9% felt their child did not. Next, to the statement, "We write stories, letters, etc. together," 24% responded yes, 57% responded sometimes, and 19% responded no. Also, 57% of the parents felt their child was a good writer, 24% felt sometimes their child was, and 19% felt their child was not. One hundred percent of

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the parents felt that writing is important. Finally, when asked about encouraging their child to write at home, 76% felt they do, 19% felt sometimes they do, and 5% felt they do not. This survey will be given again in January 2002 to compare data.

The parent survey was given to the parents at Open House in September 2001. The parents came into the targeted first and third grade classrooms and filled out the survey at their son's/daughter's desk. All of the surveys in the targeted third grade were handed in by the end of the evening. Some of the parents in the targeted first grade took them home and sent them back, some filled them out at school, and some never returned them. Parents were willing and eager to provide this survey information.

A writing sample was taken in each of the targeted classrooms in September 2001. The students were given a writing prompt and directed to, "Do your best." Students were left to work independently without teacher intervention. Writing samples were collected. A teacher and student writing performance checklist was completed.

Table 7
Teacher Writing Performance Checklist
Grade One
September 2001

	Yes	No
My story makes sense.	3	9
I used capital letters.	6	6
I used periods.	2	10
I used question marks.	na	na
I used exclamation points.	na	na
My story has a title.	12	0
My story has a beginning.	na	na
My story has a middle.	na	na
My story has an ending.	na	na
My story has three or more details.	na	na

na – not applicable at this time. This skill will be evaluated in January 2002.

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Table 8
Teacher Writing Performance Checklist
Grade Three
September 2001

	Always	Most of the time	Hardly ever
I used capital letters appropriately.	0	10	2
I used punctuation appropriately.	0	6	6
I used grammar correctly.	0	4	8
My writing is clearly stated.	0	3	9
My writing makes sense.	0	2	10
My writing has an opening sentence.	1	8	3
My writing has a closing sentence.	0	8	4
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	0	5	7
I used details in my writing.	0	4	8
I used supporting sentences.	0	3	9

Table 7 and 8 show the results of the teacher performance checklist. The results provided the teacher with the students' strengths and weaknesses that need to be reinforced in class.

The students in the targeted first and third grade were given their writing prompt to self-assess. The prompt was written in early September 2001 and the student writing performance checklist was given in November 2001. Students were to re-read their writing prompt and carefully fill out the performance checklist. Each item was read orally one at a time and the students had to answer the questions. The students were given time to assess their paper, look over the checklist, and questions were answered. Prompts and checklists were collected.

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Table 9
Student Writing Performance Checklist
Grade One
September 2001

	yes	no
My story makes sense.	11	1
I used capital letters.	10	2
I used periods.	6	6
I used question marks.	na	na
I used exclamation points.	na	na
My story has a title.	12	0
My story has a beginning.	na	na
My story has a middle.	na	na
My story has an ending.	na	na
My story has three or more details.	na	na

na – not applicable at this time. This skill will be evaluated in January 2002.

Table 10
Student Writing Performance Checklist
Grade Three
September 2001

	Always	Most of the time	Hardly ever
I used capital letters appropriately.	10	2	0
I used punctuation appropriately.	6	6	0
I used grammar correctly.	6	6	0
My writing is clearly stated.	7	4	1
My writing makes sense.	6	5	1
My writing has an opening sentence.	7	4	1
My writing has a closing sentence.	6	3	3
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	7	5	0
I used details in my writing.	5	5	2
I used supporting sentences.	4	5	3

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When comparing Tables 7 to 8 and 9 to 10 the students in the targeted first and third grades' overall self-assessment were higher than the teachers. This may be a result of students having a high opinion of their writing, or they have not had enough experience to accurately self-evaluate.

Table 11
Writing Performance Checklist
Teacher/Student Comparison "Yes" Responses
Grade One
November 2001

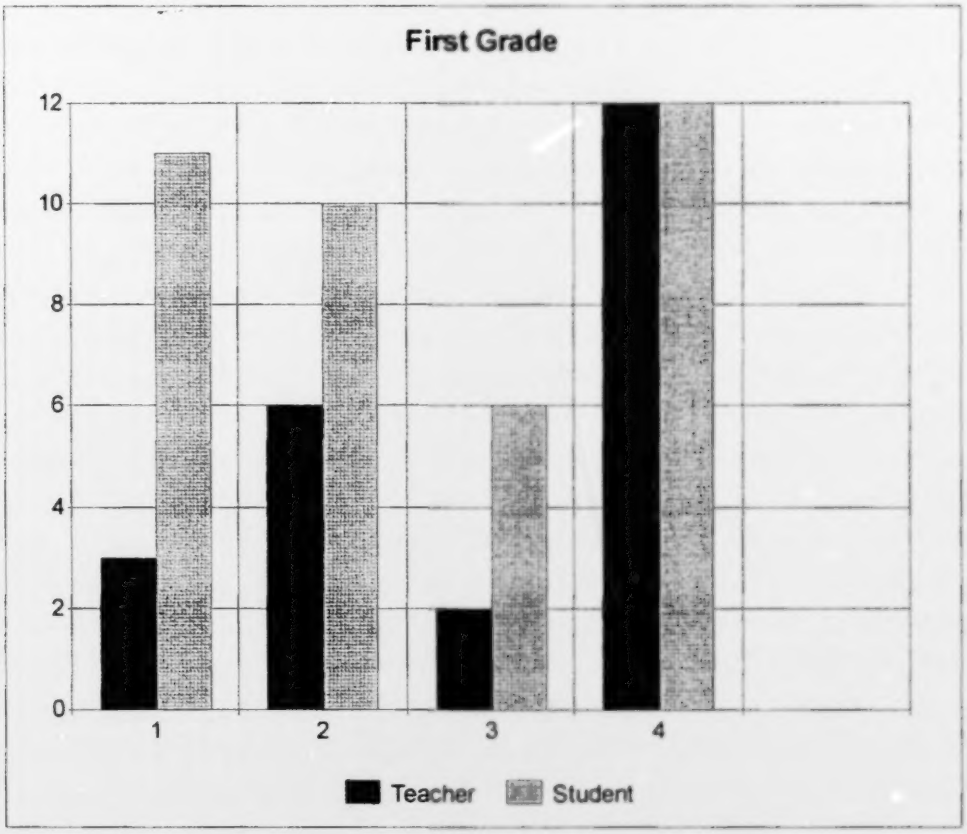
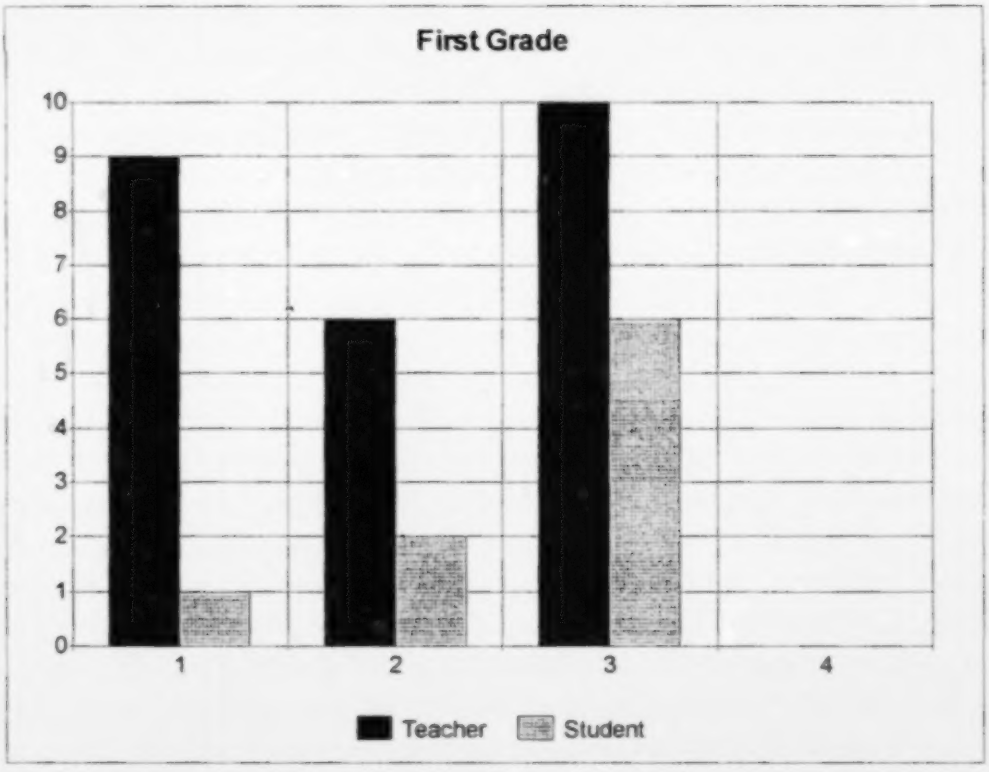


Table 12
Writing Performance Checklist
Teacher/Student "No" Responses
Grade One
November 2001



Statement numbers along horizontal axis in Table 11 and 12 are as follows:

1. My story makes sense.
2. I used capital letters.
3. I used periods.
4. My story has a title.

In Table 11 and 12 the vertical axis shows the number of students/teachers who responded to the statements.

Table 13
Writing Performance Checklist
Teacher/Student "Always" Responses
Grade Three
November 2001

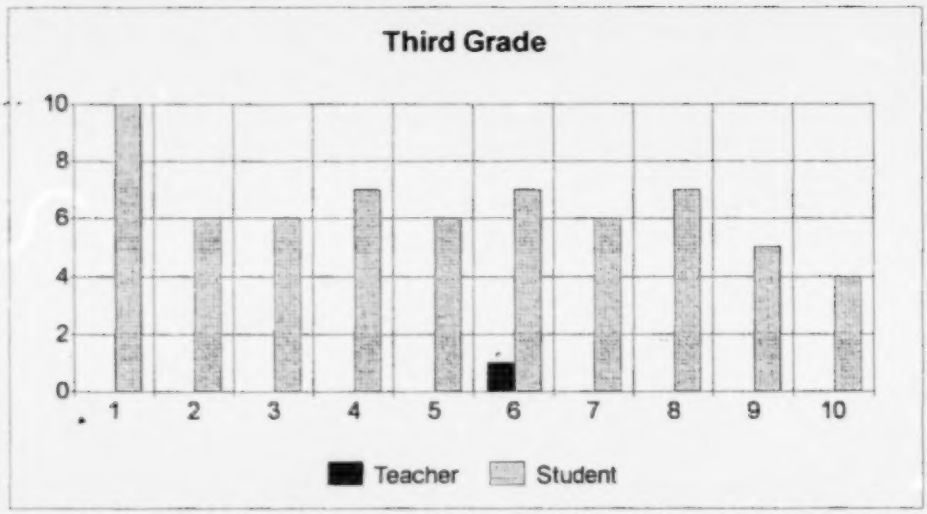


Table 14
Writing Performance Checklist
Teacher/Student "Most of the Time" Responses
Grade Three
November 2001

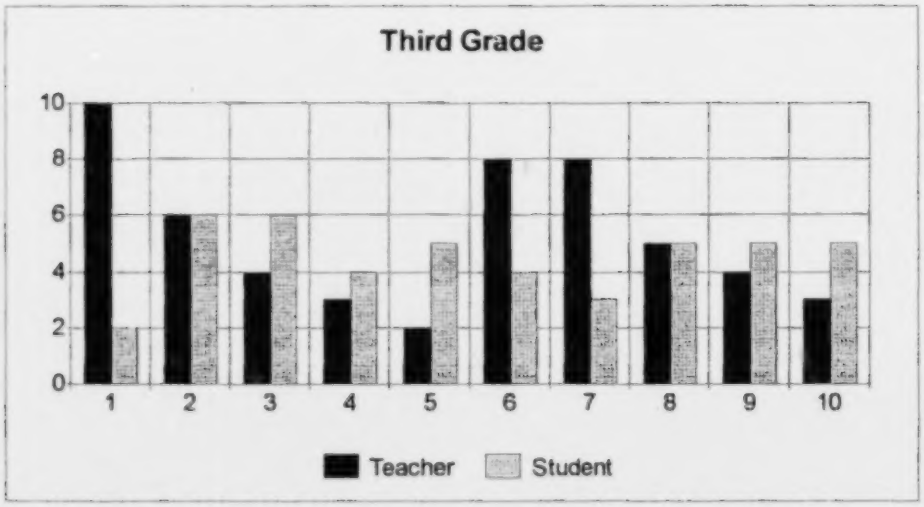
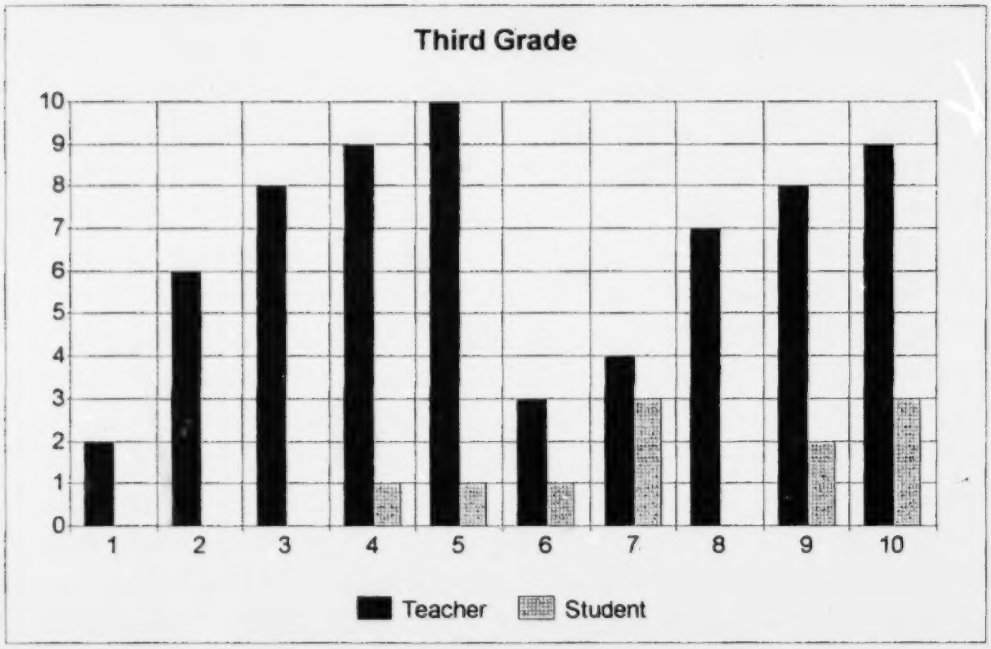


Table 15
Writing Performance Checklist
Teacher/Student "Hardly Ever" Responses
Third Grade
November 2001



In Tables 13 through 15, the numbers along the vertical axis represent the number of teachers/students that responded to each statement. The horizontal axis represents the following statements:

1. I used capital letters appropriately.
2. I used punctuation appropriately.
3. I used grammar correctly.
4. My writing is clearly stated.
5. My writing makes sense.
6. My writing has an opening sentence.

7. My writing has a closing sentence.
8. My paragraphs stick to the same topic.
9. I used details in my writing.
10. I used supporting sentences.

Tables 13 through 15 suggests that the teachers' data, in the targeted first and third grades, does not coincide with the students' data. The students have a relatively high opinion about their writing. The teacher evaluation of the data is consistently low in most areas. Through teacher interventions the students will develop writing self-awareness and structured writing through best practices.

Probable Causes

Children's literacy is a concern for elementary school teachers, because most of the allotted time and energy is devoted to helping children read rather than write (Chomsky, 1971; Sealy, Sealy, & Millmore, 1979). According to The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy at the University of California in Berkeley, time allotted for writing curriculum is hard to find. This inhibits teachers from putting forth and receiving, from the students, maximum effort. Since writing has traditionally been focused on only in language class, many educators have not incorporated writing across the curriculum (The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, 1992).

Atwell (as cited in Moutray and Ennis, 1998) feels that students need large blocks of time "to think, to write, to confer, to read, to change their minds, and then write some more" (p. 117). Students need to find what works for them. In order to do this, students need to think about writing and what they want to write. The students need time to organize their thoughts. Many

curriculums do not allow large time blocks for writing. Writing does not work affectively unless proper time is allotted (Atwell as cited in Moutray and Ennis, 2000; Routman, 1994).

Calkins (1994) states that our society and our schools have taken on a one-draft mentality. This is the "do this, do that" method and go onto the next assignment. Constant interruptions during the school day cause a decrease in learning time. According to Calkins "Many researchers emphasize that because the day is so segmented, teachers spend an average of 40% of their time on choreography. We move the class from one thing to another: "sit here," "come here," "open this book," "close that one," "get such and such out," "put it away," "line up," "sit down," "do this," "do that..." (p. 186).

Setting aside time for writing isn't simple and the challenge to do so will continue. It is almost impossible to have an effective writing program if students only write once to twice a week. This is a struggle that teachers face when scheduling a predictable place and time to write.

McBride (2000) expresses concern about the current trends in education being mandated by state boards, which require teachers to change their approach to teaching. Teachers are asked to create a curriculum according to the standards and not the content. This means that the final product is what matters. This also created another problem of knowing which direction the teaching is to take. When teachers set these goals or raise the standards, they leave behind more children who are illiterate. In the systems desperation to make change, they may establish dysfunctional literacy programs.

O'Neil (1994) feels guidelines for writing are not always clear. Students do not know ahead of time what is expected of them. Students cannot aim for quality work, if they are unsure of what quality work is.

Wiggins (1991) states that schools need benchmarks for judging students work. Many teachers feel they have failed, if the results of work are unsatisfactory. Instead teachers need to take the results, regardless of the outcome, and use them to develop a plan for student improvement. Students are also unclear what the goals of the assignments are. Students are not always part of the goal setting process. The teacher usually sets the goals for assignments. The teacher decides what the student should get out of the assignment. Therefore, the outcome is not important to the students, because the student does not choose them. They feel no personal connection to the goals. They are only important to the teachers. Students need to have choices, in all areas of their work, in order for a personal connection to take place (Kietzmann, Mathews, Westerfield, Young, 1997).

Calkins (1994) states that in order to develop accomplished writers, teachers need to educate and help students focus on what is important. Very often quantity has been the main focus of writing; not quality. Calkins feels it's not how many products are completed, it's becoming an accomplished author that's important. Conventional approaches to writing focus on the product versus the process of writing (Murray as cited in Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, and Woodside-Jiron, 2000). Teachers need to redirect their focus on writing. They need to focus on "helping developing authors become more accomplished writers as opposed to creating a series of excellent written products" (Calkins, 1994, p. 228). Teachers are often too concerned with the "look" of the writing and not the quality. Often writing assignments, which focus on neatness or spelling, are unclear and lack substance. All of the effort was put into the appearance and not into quality writing. Children need to revise with "thoughtful analysis of their work," focusing on quality and not appearance (Cowan as cited in Hill, 1992).

In order to present quality writing, teachers must be confident and clear about themselves and writing (Wiggins, 1991). Routman (1994) believes in many classrooms, teaching of writing is not "natural." Routman also suggests that writing is presented as a mechanical process focusing on "how" and not considering "why." Students are not shown through teacher modeling, for example, that writing needs to be personal. The neglect of student ownership and sense of purpose have been strongly criticized. Students need to explore their own point of view, opinions, and experiences in order for the writer to feel ownership. Teachers need to abandon older ways of thinking and translate them into newer views for the students to find ownership (Applebee as cited in Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, and Woodside-Jiron, 2000).

Writing components, used in isolation, do not work. Students need to feel a connection with what they are writing. The students need "authentic writing experiences." Authentic writing experiences means having students write for real audiences. It also means giving students choices; choices of topics and choices of the students' writing and final drafts. When students just write for a grade, without caring, there is no ownership and no voice (Swartzendruber-Putnam, 2000).

Teachers often struggle with giving control and allowing students more choices (Routman, 1994; Graves, 1983). Children are given topics to write about, not given a choice of topics. These writings are dull and uncreative, because there is no commitment or ownership by the writer. They are disinterested in writing about what the teacher wants. Teachers then wonder why students lack creativity and motivation. It is the teacher taking these away from the students. Students then think they do not have control over their thinking, learning or motivation. The effects of this loss of control are a decreased interest and a lack of participation. Students do not want to make an attempt to write for self-satisfaction. They have abandoned

their literacy learning. This failure attitude can also move into other areas of their school and personal life. They do not monitor their performance or make attributions for success and failure. Teachers need to give students back the control and establish classroom environments to promote learning (Kietzmann, Mathews, Westerfield, & Young, 1997).

Lack of choice results in lack of student voice. According to Graves, schools are quick to remove students' voices. Educators take control away from the students and stifle the writer's urge to show what they know. Children want to write, and upon entering school, feel they are writers. Many school approaches to teaching writing cause the students to feel inadequate as writers or creators. The school approaches take away the writers feeling of "I am," and instead, have the student think, "what does the teacher want" (Graves, 1983).

According to Reeves (1997) children get caught up in their writing, and they loose the meaning of what they are writing for. Educators create students who would do anything to avoid writing. This creates apprehensive writers. The apprehensive writer has been judged unsatisfactory by teachers along the way. A lack of self-confidence develops when students can't seem to find anything good about their writing. Negative past experiences play an important role in the writing forum. Students have experienced the worst and now figure "why bother." Students will refuse to write for fear of self-exposure, criticism, ridicule, and/or failure. Along the way students have formulated the idea that what they have to say is not important. Reeves experienced apprehension first hand. She had a teacher in elementary school who told her "not to answer so many questions because the other children would begin to dislike her" (p. 38). This unintentional, unknowing comment made by the teacher made Reeves very apprehensive as a writer. The seed of self-doubt had been planted. This teacher "stole" her voice. It took Reeves a long time and a lot of hard work to compensate for her lack of

self-confidence. Unfortunately, even though she had many degrees and publications, she is to this day, an apprehensive writer. She continues to struggle to find her voice.

Different approaches to writing have been criticized. The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy researches ways to improve and understand how writing is best taught, learned, and used in school and everyday life. The Center's research from 1985-1990 shows that the learning and teaching of writing needs to be reshaped and improved. Schools need to investigate and develop new approaches to learning and teaching. These approaches need to "recognize the skills students already bring with them, recognize the variety of writing practices students need to learn, seek to give students the opportunity to find their own voices in writing, and connects with students lives" (The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy, 1992, p. 1).

Training teachers on effective writing is an ongoing process. Teachers receive uneven professional development in writing. Thus there are many differences in what teachers learn about writing and the writing process. Since teachers also bring with them their beliefs and approaches, teaching and learning writing is often perceived differently by different students. The students come away from their writing experience with a different idea of writing and the writing process than their peers.

There are other challenges that prevent effective training such as:

1. staff growth
2. unclear of job descriptions
3. lack of responsibility

As the staff continues to grow, finding time and money for training or workshops becomes harder and harder. Many areas cannot keep up with the changes. Many of the job

descriptions are also not clear as to whose job it is to teach writing. Finally, teaching writing takes time and a lot of energy. Many teachers are not willing to put forth, due to many reasons, the effort that is needed.

Many teachers are not confident about giving feedback on writing. Many teachers look at writing as subjective, and feel it is unfair to make critical comments on students' work. Fear of being overly critical, hurting students' feelings, or stifling their desire to write is a concern. Many see writing as impossible to grade (Essex, 1996). Glazer (1994) feels that teachers can create practical, useful, and fair assessments providing the teacher understands how.

Rhodes and Shanklin (1993) believe that the assessment process plays a key role in teacher involvement. Norm referenced tests will not improve teacher instruction or teacher learning. It may hold educators accountable to the parents and the public, but it does not improve teacher instruction. Norm referenced tests often discourages school reform and the end result is educators teaching for the test. Once again, the improvement for learning and teaching is lost. In our constant world of testing, teachers collect little information that will help provide better instruction. The mandating of testing becomes something teachers must do, and not a valued source of teacher-student learning. Teachers are not trained in the area of assessment. Information is lacking in techniques, instructions, and literacy development.

Parents also, lack training in the area of literacy. They need to know what the writing expectations are, so they can work collaboratively with teachers. Parents do not know what questions to ask about their child's work, why places or things they perceive as errors are not marked wrong, and how to evaluate their child's paper. Parents need training to be an effective support for their children and the teachers (Wiggins 1991).

Mara Casey and Stephen J. Hemenway (2001) conducted research about writing. They did a longitudinal study of third grade students at Linden School and followed them through high school. The students were interviewed again in sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade. Their findings were very disturbing. Students often loose their desire and motivation to write early on. This is largely due to the teacher's view of writing. Students are given very few opportunities to do anything except "formulaic" paragraph writing. Teachers believe it is their job to prepare students for junior high school. Therefore, many teachers feel writing for pleasure or even fiction writing is a waste of time.

Many teachers only teach one type of writing because they want to stay within their comfort zone. If a teacher cannot narrow a student's focus when writing fiction, for example, they choose to not do it rather than be frustrated or consume time trying.

Students also need direction when using the writing process. This is a hard concept for students to grasp without a lot of opportunities to practice. Practice takes large blocks of time. Students will not do something on their own they feel is difficult, unless they have ample time to complete and tackle the task. Casey and Hemenway feel when teachers do not allow enough time for the writing process, teachers are sending a critical message. The message is that the teacher does not value writing as a process.

Criticism is also given to the follow through for writing. What is taught in one grade, unfortunately, may not follow through to the next. There is no universal writing format. What is required and expected one year many not be the same the next year. Students who learn to love writing in journals, reflecting on their writing, and sharing their writing with others are suddenly forced into a cookie cutter mold. The teacher gives an assignment, it is handed in, and it is handed back. No discussions, no choices.

Casey and Hemenway concluded that there was a "loss of motivation and enthusiasm for writing, waste and loss of voice, style, ownership, pride, and engagement; lost opportunities to continue to write with passion and lost opportunities for subsequent teachers to build on the pleasure and personal satisfaction the students had discovered in primary writing" (Casey & Hemenway, 2001, p. 74).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The need to improve writing skills for all children is an important concern in education. Writing skills can develop through teacher intervention and self-reflection. Writing plays an important role in people's academic, vocational, social, and personal lives. Writing is also an expression of the inner voice that solidifies learning and promotes ownership of ideas. The development of student's ability to write is a main priority in schooling (Chapman, 1990).

Donald Grave, author of *Writing-Teachers and Children at Work* (1983), has been involved with writing since 1972. His investigation into writing has taken him down many different roads. Graves is an advocate for student success. In his book, he writes about his experiences with writing. He has explained what he feels works, and what doesn't. Graves suggests all educators stand back and observe a child's way of working, helping the child find his or her own way. All children have the ability to write. Children write in many different ways, using many different means. Some write words, some scribble marks. The important thing is that all children believe they can write. Their marks have voice and say "I am" (Graves, 1983). It is the educators' responsibility to encourage and develop student writing. Teachers work to empower the writers. Writers need to discover their own meanings through teacher

guidance. Students must have the opportunity for choice, decision-making, peer response, and to make personal connections. Educators need to guide students, respond to them, and extend their thinking process. The educators' role is that of a facilitator; supportive not directive, suggestive not prescriptive (Routman, 1994). In the primary grades, what is important is students begin to write and reflect upon how they feel (Freedman & Hechinger, 1992).

The literature has described two main categories of writing; writing for pleasure and teacher guided writing process (Cooper, 2000). Tompkins (1982) suggests seven reasons why children should write stories:

1. To entertain
2. To foster artistic expression
3. To explore the functions and values of writing
4. To stimulate imagination
5. To clarify thinking and explore personal knowledge
6. To search for identity

Lucy Calkins, the author of *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994) has worked with many well-known educators in what is referred to as The Teacher's College Writing Project. Calkins believes that children must get involved in their writing, share what they have written, and perceive themselves as authors. Authorship does not begin in the struggle to put words on the paper; rather it begins with self-awareness. Calkins states that writing is not only the process of recording; it is also the process of developing an idea or a story. Calkins goes on to say that writing allows us to celebrate, reflect on special moments, and create something beautiful out of something experienced. Writing gives our truths value and significance, which becomes a process of growing meaning. Calkins feels the importance of writing is providing children with

a predictable place and schedule. The children need to know what to expect. According to Calkins, creating writing structure includes mini-lessons, work time, peer conferring or response groups, share sessions, and publication celebrations.

"Work time" is an indispensable part of the writing workshop. Students may work in a variety of different places; floor, tables, desks, and/or stations. Students work at different paces and on different topics. The main rule in the writing workshop is during writing, everyone writes.

Peer conferring is a summary of what the child needs to work on that day. This is a time when students think aloud about their writing. Peer conferences are student-initiated and about five minutes long. The students talk about their work in progress. Peer conference groups contain two to six students. Response groups contain four or five students chosen by the teacher. Students take turns talking about writing. The group listens and acts as a sounding board.

Share sessions are a gathering time when students share their work in progress in a whole group setting. Students may take turns in an author's chair with a small group, or in a one-to-one peer conference. These sharing times help provide modeling for peer conferring and response groups. Students can begin to see what quality work looks and sounds like.

Publication celebrations are a coming together to celebrate published and finished work. This may happen every Friday, every six weeks, or whenever the teacher decides to celebrate the students' work. The celebrations may include parents, grandparents, other classes, teachers from previous years, or family members. This is a time to celebrate and recognize best work.

Mini-lessons are used to reinforce what writers often need to do: such as keeping to one topic, re-reading one's work, self-evaluation, and revisiting conventions. Teachers, after assessing student work, will create the mini-lessons. Mini-lessons are used to reinforce areas

where the students are lacking (Calkins, 1994). Mini-lessons are brief. They are used at any step of the writing process, when the need arises.

Process writing is writing instruction in which the teacher guides students through certain stages or steps to complete the writing piece. Graves developed the concepts represented in the writing process. Many educators and researchers refer to it as the authoring cycle. The authoring cycle is a guide developed to help teachers observe students' writing and the writing process. This cycle, as described by Harste & Short, Withburke (1998), includes rehearsing, drafting, conferring, revisiting, editing, and publishing (Harper & Brewer, 1996; Rhodes, 1993; Calkins, 1986; Hansen, 1987; Harper & Brewer, 1996; Stice et al., 1995). The authoring cycle takes on many names; substituting the terms "life experiences" for "rehearsing," "uninterrupted writing" for "drafting," "author's circle" for "conferring." Revising, editing, and publishing are titled the same, but more emphasis is placed on self-editing (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993).

Rehearsing is the first step in writing. Children need to decide what method of communication they think will work best for them. Drawing pictures is a good start for young writers. Lists, webs, and maps are used for a young mature writer. Sharing ideas with others helps the writers elaborate and clarify their thinking before they begin to write.

Drafting is the next part of the cycle, which refers to the ability of the writer to put his or her thoughts down on the paper. Reading and rereading one's text involves fluency and spelling strategies (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993). In this stage, students need to write to create and communicate the meaning. The focus is not on mechanics. Drafting gives teachers and students a place to start. Encouragement is needed for students to focus on words and ideas. Students need to attempt to spell and use any words they choose. Limiting words, limits the quality of young children's writing (Poindexter, 1998). If children are given a word limit, the quality and

creativity of the child's work suffers. Children are focused on the words and not on the flow of writing.

Conferring offers the students the chance to rehearse ideas and receive honest feedback that helps the writer to understand the strengths and areas that need to be improved on. This part of the authoring cycle may include a teacher and/or peers.

Revising is the "re-vision" which involves "re-seeing" the ideas in a piece of writing. Changes range from adding information to deleting information to creating a clear focus to organizing ideas, including all parts of the changes students may make in the revising part of the cycle.

Editing and revision are not the same. The editing process refers to the process of conforming to conventions, not the changing of ideas. Children need to develop into self-editors. This takes time and plenty of practice. Teacher and peer editing is still a benefit at this stage.

Publishing is the final text, the final production ready for sharing. These final products come in many forms; letters, books, articles, poems, scripts, and pamphlets. Publishing means "going public" with one's voice – The audience can create a positive experience for the author (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993).

If writing is to be shared, each stage must be completed to understand what a final product will look and sound like. Student ownership remains the focus of the writing process. At the beginning level, the teacher must model the stages repeatedly. Teacher-student class books are a good way to reinforce the modeling of the writing process. A teacher/student class book is a book, which is written as a class, with teacher guidance.

Regie Routman has been teaching in public schools and associated with education for three decades. She has taught most grades in elementary school. Routman's experiences also

included being reading specialist, learning disabilities tutor, reading recovery teacher, and staff developer. She gives many lectures and conducts workshops. Routman has written many books including; *Invitations, Literacy at the Crossroads, and Transitions: From Literature to Literacy.* Routman believes in order to make writing relevant to a child one must write with a child. Routman suggests a modeling technique called "writing aloud." This technique can be used with any grade level. Writing aloud is when a teacher writes in front of the class, on large chart paper or transparencies, for example. Through the teacher's verbalization, the class can see the writing and thinking process. The teacher verbalizes the following writing skills; thinking, format, layout, spacing, handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary choice. Students can then relate written words to spoken words. Motivation and interest are increased through writing modeling. Students begin to understand the process and build confidence in themselves. Teachers are simply to guide, directing students toward independence. Students will begin to recognize quality work if they receive feedback, editing practice, models, and opportunities to write for real audiences. They can then become the best judges of their own work (Routman, 1994).

The "voice" is the dynamo of the writing process, the reason for the writing in the first place. The voice starts with the choice of the topic. According to Graves, students who choose their own topic make the most growth in information and skills. Students write about what they know or personal experience. They do not need to wonder "what comes next." It is their experience, therefore, they know. They have taken ownership of the piece. Once ownership is established, confidence and pride follow (Graves, 1983). Applebee (as cited in Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels and Woodside-Jiron, 2000) feels, "In writing, opportunities for ownership occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions or to elaborate

upon a point of view" (p. 554). Applebee sees the opportunities are developed through teacher understanding and putting the writing process into practice. Research states that giving students a choice of topic allows them to discover their own purpose and meaning for the written word (Graves, 1983; Routman, 1994; McBride, 2000; Atwell, 1987). "Voice is the imprint of ourselves on our writing. Take away the voice and the writing collapses" (Graves, 1983, p. 227).

Journal notebooks provide students with an organized place to record their personal thoughts, develop consistency, fluency, and confidence in their writing skills (Cooper, 2000). Journal writing is a safe place for students to write what and how they want. Journals are important because they allow students to practice their writing in a non-threatening way (Reeves, 1997). Journals encourage students to think for themselves (Swartzendruber-Putnem, 2000). Journals of all types are used to help understand one's self. This use of writing has been considered to be a "tool for thought" (Atwell, 1990; Fulwiler, 1980, 1987). Journals of all types develop self-expression and the understanding of one's feelings. This is a means in which one can communicate with one's inner self. Students learn to become good writers when educators create a non-threatening, practice-like atmosphere. In a practice-like atmosphere, grades and lectures take a back seat to expression; freedom for students to express themselves in both writing and speaking. Students are encouraged to look inward, to personal experience, for reflection and meaning (Reeves, 1997).

Teacher guided writing and process writing are important pieces to the puzzle. Students need to celebrate and share all finished or published products (Stice et al., 1995). The sharing of student's work is the final stage of the writing process. "Children tend to learn to write faster, better, and more joyfully when they do so for their own purpose, under the guidance and encouragement of a knowledgeable teacher" (Stice et al., 1995, p. 251). Student writers benefit

from both reading and listening to others. Reading helps create a bond of trust within the classroom, creating a feeling of family or community (Bingen, 2000). The classroom climate, which promotes writing, includes encouragement, humor, responsibility, support, and a daily concentrated workshop (Moutray & Ennis, 1998).

Many people believe the purpose of assessment is to plan and guide literacy instruction through the use of student work (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson & Preece, 1991; Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993; Tierney, 1998; Tierney et al., 1991). It is important to give students opportunities to see and measure growth, for example, by using goal charts or by comparing earlier and later samples of writing. It is necessary for students to see they are making progress. If students are given the opportunity for identifying and choosing their own areas for improvement, they can take full responsibility and credit for improvements made. The piece is theirs, along with their choices (McBride, 2000). One method of assessment is to create a portfolio of the student's work. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of one's work that exhibits to the student and others, efforts and achievements (Arter & Spandel, 1991). Portfolios enable children to assess their own work, keep individual progress, and provide a basis for evaluating over-all performance (Meisels & Steele, 1991). The use of portfolios can be intended to promote learning through self-assessment and reflection, to motivate, and develop students as thinkers and writers (Murphy & Smith, 1990; Arter, 1995).

Robert Calfee (1995) studied the use of portfolios in elementary and middle school. Calfee is a cognitive psychologist. His areas of interest include the effects of schooling on the intellectual potential of individuals and groups. In his early years, his interest was mainly in assessment of literary skills. His interests later evolved to the school environment as a shaper of intellectual processes. He writes about effects of testing educational indicators and teacher

assessment. He is currently the Dean of the school of education at the University of California in Riverside. Calfee is also the vice chair of the state commission developing academic standards for public school.

In Calfee's study he states that portfolios contain samples of writing. Portfolios relieve time pressures standardized tests place on children. Calfee calls the movement toward portfolios a "positive revolution." Students are required to demonstrate what they have learned and how to make choices in a "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" fashion. Portfolios give teachers a new sense of energy and commitment, the need to reevaluate their work. Portfolios put teachers in charge of the way they teach and students in charge of selecting and criticizing their work. Writing is important to our society, culture, and our position globally. The National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy (NCSWL) is an educational research center sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The center is based at the University of California in Berkeley and has a site at the Carnegie Mellon University. The center works with elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities to help aid in developing and improving the teaching of writing. The Center's four main objectives are:

1. To create useful theories for the teaching and learning of writing
2. To understand more fully the connections between writing and learning
3. To provide a national focal point for writing research
4. To disseminate its results to American educators, policymakers, and the public

Writing is important to our society, culture, and our position globally. Writing is active, it allows change, and it gives us the chance to take control of our lives. Developing writing in our schools and communities is essential to our cultural and individual well-being (Freedman, Flower, Hull, Hayes, 1995).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on the writing process, during the period of September 2001 to January 2002, the first and third grade students from the targeted class will increase their ability to use writing skills, as measured by student journals, writing samples, Daily Oral Language, and student portfolios.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. A series of learning activities that address writing will be developed in Language Arts.
2. Materials that develop writing skills in Language Arts will be created.
3. A writing unit reflecting these decisions will be constructed.

Action Plan

1. Daily Oral Language

   Purpose: To provide teachers with an effective structure for teaching, reinforcing, and assessing student's oral and written language skills, proofreading skills, and self-assessment.

   A. Students in the targeted first and third grades will keep a Daily Oral Language folder, which will include a weekly correction sheet and a weekly evaluation sheet (to be completed by the teacher on Friday).

   B. Daily presentation of a writing sample containing mechanical errors will be displayed on the chalkboard.

   C. Students will offer needed corrections. Corrections will be discussed in whole group.

   D. The teacher on a daily basis will correct Daily Oral Language sentence sheets.

2. Direct Writing Prompts

   Purpose: To learn how to write in paragraph form to a specific topic.

   A. Teacher will model appropriate writing skills.

B. Student will complete one writing prompt every two weeks.

C. Students self-assess their writing using a student checklist.

D. Teacher assesses writing using a teacher checklist.

3. Journal Writing

Purpose: To gain experience in writing for enjoyment.

A. Ten to fifteen minutes of none structured journal time will be allocated every day.

B. Students will be given the opportunity to share their journal writing with their peers.

C. Journal writing will not be evaluated.

4. Portfolios

Purpose: To involve the students in the assessment process through self-evaluation. The portfolios will also provide parents and teachers with information regarding students' growth in writing.

A. Students will be given a white corrugated box to decorate as they choose.

B. After each writing activity students will write a reflection.

C. The work will be stored in the portfolio (white corrugated box).

D. A one-on-one student teacher conference will be held every two weeks to note improvement as a result of self-assessment.

E. The portfolio selection will be given to the students at the end of the sixteen weeks. The students will choose four writing pieces that reflect the choices given.

F. A portfolio pajama party will be held in January 2002. The students in the targeted first and third grades will share the contents of their portfolios with a partner.

G. A portfolio night will be held in January 2002. The students will share the contents of their portfolios with friends and family.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, the parent survey, and the student questionnaire, completed in September 2001, will be readministered in January 2002. The results will be analyzed and charted.

The teacher writing performance checklist and the student performance checklist will be administered in September 2001 and January 2002. The data will be collected, analyzed, and reported in graph for comparison. The teacher will complete weekly Daily Oral Language assessments (Appendix H). This data will provide evidence of correct sentence structure and grammatical usage.

In addition, portfolios of student work in writing will be kept throughout the intervention. Conferences with students will also be held as part of the assessment process.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The main objective of this project was to improve student-writing skills through a variety of writing experiences and evaluation. During the period of September 2001 and January 2002 teacher interventions and evaluations were implemented to increase the students' writing skills and self-assessment.

At the beginning of the intervention students were given a writing questionnaire and parents were given a writing survey. The purpose was to identify student and parent feelings towards writing. The students and parents evaluated their thoughts and opinions about writing. In addition, students completed a writing sample, which was evaluated by the teacher and the students using a checklist.

The following strategies of the implementation plan addressed reinforcing and assessing students' oral and written language skills and proofreading skills. The students in the targeted first and third grades kept a D.O.L. (Daily Oral Language) notebook. A daily presentation of a written sample containing mechanical errors was displayed on the chalkboard. Students offered needed corrections, and corrections were discussed in a whole group setting.

After five weeks of teaching demonstration, the targeted first and third grade students worked independently making editing marks and rewriting sentences correctly in their notebooks. Whole group corrections were made on a daily basis. The classroom teacher recorded daily percentages (Appendix H).

A writing center was created in the classroom. This was an area where the students were able to collect paper, patterns, book covers, and art supplies that would encourage creativity. The writing center included writing folders. These writing folders contained the student's first and last names, a " work in progress" pocket, and a "ready to publish" pocket. Students would keep all writing projects in their folder until they were ready to publish. When a student was finished with a piece of writing, they would self-edit (Appendix K), share with a peer, peer edit (Appendix L), and students would make necessary changes.

Time was allotted for those students who wanted to share with a larger group. The "share chair" was a highly visible chair placed in the middle of the classroom for student sharing.

Student writing samples were collected upon completion. After a checklist (Appendices I and J) or reflection was completed, the work was placed in the student's portfolio. Students were given a white corrugated box to decorate as they chose. Writing samples were stored in their portfolio box after sharing with a peer, teacher, small group, or whole group. The portfolios provided student assessment through self-evaluation. The portfolios also provided teachers and parents with information regarding student's growth. Music and a short "You are an author" ceremony took place every two weeks.

Individual spelling dictionaries were given to every student in the first and third grades to encourage correct spelling. Students in the first grade used inventive spelling, the word wall, or

used the spelling dictionary provided. If students needed teacher assistance, the teacher would highlight or write the word on the correct page in the first grade dictionary.

Students in the third grade also used a thesaurus to help create a broad use of the English language. Students would highlight commonly used words in their writing pieces and use the thesaurus to develop a wider range of vocabulary words.

A great deal of written practice was given to the students to provide vocabulary application, a sense of self, and the ability to write what they know. A spiral journal was provided for each student. The students wrote in their daily journal. Journal writing was done strictly for pleasure and was not evaluated. Students would share, if they felt the need or desire.

Students were given opportunities to write for enjoyment purposes as well as formalized writing. Direct writing prompts were given to students to develop paragraph form. Each week a teacher directed mini-lesson was given to the whole class. Some of these lessons included creating a complete thought, beginning with a capital letter, ending with a punctuation mark, writing a clear beginning, middle and ending, good titles, indenting, proofreading, and writing using details.

Through teacher modeling the students were taught specific types of writing. Graphic organizers, T-charts, brainstorming webs, KWL charts, and Venn diagrams were used to help organize the students' thoughts and ideas. Books and videos (Appendix M) were used to provide background information, motivate the students, enhance creativity, and present students with a variety of writing styles. Students' experiences with different types of writing and writing choices helped to enrich their writing development.

The first and third grade classes shared several different writing pieces. In October, the first grade shared Halloween stories. After reading *Spooky Spells* the first grade

students took on the challenge of writing a sequential story. Story parts were written on skeleton bones. Each bone was chronologically numbered. Bones included a beginning, middle, and an ending. A witch and kettle were colored and mounted on black paper. The bones were stored in the kettle. The first grade students shared their stories with the third graders. After the completion of the story sharing, the teachers made a tasty treat of "witches stew" with the class. This activity was important to the first graders, because it was their first attempt at writing a story independently. The first graders were proud of their writing. They demonstrated enthusiasm, courage and confidence in their writing.

In celebration of National Sandwich Day, the third grade students read *The Great Jam Sandwich* and *Sam's Sandwich*. These books motivated the students to create a sandwich story of their own. Brainstorming included the setting, characters, the problem, and the solution of the story. Large chart paper was used to collect the brainstorming terms illustrating students' ideas. These charts were posted around the classroom. These charts provided direction for student writing. Students wrote rough drafts, which were self-edited, peer-edited, and revised. Pattern pieces resembling sandwich fillings were provided. Students choose paper color and pattern pieces to create their individualized story. A ring connected the pages. A Ziploc bag was used to store the sandwich story in.

The third grade students invited the first grade student to come and share stories and sandwiches. After the third graders read their stories, each first and third grade pair made a sandwich together. The third grade students developed an understanding of the writing process. The third grade students demonstrated pride in their accomplishment, a sense of self-respect, and a high level of confidence in their ability to write.

The first and third grade students were invited by invitation to a pajama party to share portfolio pieces. Pajamas, slippers, and robes were worn to school. Stuffed animals and blankets were brought by some of the students. The classes met in a large carpeted room, providing plenty of floor space. First and third graders paired up. The first graders shared their writing pieces and the third graders listened intently. After twenty minutes the third graders began the same process of sharing their portfolio pieces. Students shared their "best work," "hand picked pieces," "super star work," and "self-reflections" (Appendix N). The students offered positive support to each other. The atmosphere was energetic, uplifting, and awe-inspiring. Students were focused on their partners. The students wanted to continue sharing and asked if "we could have another portfolio celebration at the end of the school year." Portfolios were put away. A Dr. Seuss mini-lesson was presented including a biography, video, and a class discussion about Dr. Seuss. Refreshments of cookies and juice were provided for the students. To end this perfect day, students reflected on their partner's portfolio pieces with positive comments. The students left the room hand in hand with smiles from ear to ear. This left the teachers feeling energized and ready to take on the next new challenge.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to access the effects of student writing improvement, the results of the student writing questionnaire, the parent survey, student writing checklist, and teacher checklist were analyzed. The data represents 12 children chosen at random from the targeted first and third grades. Tables 16 through 23 represents questionnaires given to 26 students in the targeted first grade and 25 students in the targeted third grade. Student numbers are not in agreement because of changing enrollment. Tables 24 through 29 represent data from the parent survey. There were 20 returned in the targeted first grade and 22 returned in the targeted third grade. The

following tables show how student attitudes have changed towards writing after the intervention was completed. Following each table is an interpretation and analysis of the results.

Table 16
Writing Questionnaire
Comparing "Yes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I like to write.	15	20
I find it easy to write.	11	23
I like to write in school.	14	21
I like to write at home.	19	22
I am proud of what I write.	16	21

Table 16 indicates that in September 57% of the class liked to write. When compared with the questionnaire given in January an increase of 20 % of the students responded, " I like to write." As indicated in statement two, "I find it easy to write," an increase of 46% of the students found it easy to write. In comparing statement three, "I like to write in school," the students' growth from September to January increased by 27%. The student questionnaire indicated a 12% increase in writing at home, and a 19% increase on statement five, "I am proud of what I write."

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Table 17
Writing Questionnaire
Comparing "Sometimes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I like to write.	6	4
I find it easy to write.	7	2
I like to write in school.	3	1
I like to write at home.	2	2
I am proud of what I write.	5	3

Table 17 indicates in September 27% of the students responded "sometimes" to the statement "I find it easy to write." When compared with January, there was a decrease of 19% of the students responding to the statement "I find it easy to write."

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Table 18
Writing Questionnaire
Comparing "No" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I like to write.	3	2
I find it easy to write.	6	1
I like to write in school.	7	4
I like to write at home.	3	2
I am proud of what I write.	3	2

Table 18 indicates in September 23% of the students responded "no" to the statement "I find it easy to write." When compared with January, there was a decrease of 20% of the students responding to the statement "I find it easy to write." This decrease is a result of the increase in "yes" responses to the statement "I find it easy to write," as documented in Table 16. This increase provided the comparison of the first grade students' attitude change toward writing.

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Table 19
Writing Questionnaire
Comparing "Always" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I like to write.	13	19
I find it easy to write.	15	14
I think writing is important.	15	16
I like to write at school.	8	17
I like to write at home.	14	18
I am proud of what I write.	20	19
I am good at putting my ideas on paper.	12	17
Writing helps me tell what I learned.	19	19
I am able to revise my writing.	14	16
I write different types of stories.	17	22

Table 19 showed in September 52% of the students responded always for the questionnaire statement "I like to write." In January 76% of the students responded to the same questionnaire statement, providing a 45% increase. Additionally, 60% of the students responded "always" for the September questionnaire statement "I find it easy to write." In January the students responded to the same statement providing a 4% decrease. Thirty-two percent of the students responded "always" to the September questionnaire statement "I like to write in school." The January response to the same questionnaire statement provided a 36% increase. Also, in September 48% of the students responded "always" to the questionnaire statement "I am good at putting my ideas on the paper." In January students responded to the same questionnaire statement with an increase of 20%. Comparison of the September questionnaire results provided

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researchers with results that students may answer according to how they should rather than how they truly felt.

Table 20
Writing Questionnaire
Comparing "Sometimes" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I like to write.	7	5
I find it easy to write.	8	9
I think writing is important.	5	9
I like to write at school.	13	6
I like to write at home.	3	3
I am proud of what I write.	3	6
I am good at putting my ideas on paper.	8	6
Writing helps me tell what I learned.	5	5
I am able to revise my writing.	8	9
I write different types of stories.	5	3

Table 20 indicates in September 28% of the students responded "sometimes" to the statement "I like to write in school." When compared with January there was a decrease of 8% of the students responding to the statement "I like to write in school."

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Table 21
Writing Questionnaire
Comparing "Never" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I like to write.	4	1
I find it easy to write.	1	2
I think writing is important.	4	0
I like to write at school.	3	2
I like to write at home.	7	4
I am proud of what I write.	1	0
I am good at putting my ideas on paper.	4	2
Writing helps me tell what I learned.	0	1
I am able to revise my writing.	2	0
I write different types of stories.	2	0

Table 21 indicates in September 16% of the students responded "never" to the statement "I like to write in school." When compared with January there was a decrease of 14% of the students responding to the statement "I like to write in school." This increase provided the comparison of the third grade students' attitude change toward writing in school.

The results of Tables 16 through 21 indicate the first and third grade students expressed significant change in the area of "I find it easy to write." This is the result of teacher modeling, a positive atmosphere, interesting subject matter, and challenging and motivating projects. The students in the first and third grades' overall feeling about writing are positive and upbeat.

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Table 22
Writing Questionnaire
Grade One
January 2002

"What kind of writer do you think you are?

Sept. 2001 Good	Jan. 2002 Good	Sept. 2001 OK	Jan. 2002 OK	Sept. 2001 Poor	Jan. 2002 Poor
14	20	7	5	3	1

Table 22 showed that of the question asked in September, "What kind of writer do you think you are?" 58% of the first grade students responded "Good," 29% responded "O.K.," and 3 % responded "Poor." In January the students responded to the same question providing an increase of 19% for "Good," decreased 10% for "O.K.," and 9% decrease for "Poor."

Table 23
Writing Questionnaire
Grade Three
January 2002

"What kind of writer do you think you are?

Sept. 2001 Great	Jan. 2002 Great	Sept. 2001 Good	Jan. 2002 Good	Sept. 2001 Aver.	Jan. 2002 Aver.	Sept. 2001 Poor	Jan. 2002 Poor
12	12	10	10	0	3	2	0

Table 23 showed that of the question asked in September, "What kind of writer do you think you are?" 41 % of the third grade students responded "Great," 42% responded "Good," 0% responded "Average," and 8% responded "Poor." In January the students responded to the same question providing an increase of 7% for the response "Great," no change for the response "Good," an increase of 12% for the response "Average," and a decrease of 8% for the response "Poor." The researchers concluded students developed self-confidence, self-motivation, high interest levels, and student ownership.

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Tables 24 through 29 shows the results of the parent survey. It was again given to the parents in January 2002.

Table 24
Parent Survey
Comparing "Yes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My child writes at home for pleasure.	7	14
I write at home for pleasure.	5	4
I read what my child writes.	15	20
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	5	7
We share what we write.	11	12
I make corrections on my children's papers.	10	15
I feel my child likes to write.	10	14
I think my child is a good writer.	9	12
I think writing is important.	16	20
I encourage my child to write at home.	14	17

Table 25
Parent Survey
Comparing "No" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My child writes at home for pleasure.	1	2
I write at home for pleasure.	3	8
I read what my child writes.	1	0
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	1	1
We share what we write.	2	0
I make corrections on my children's papers.	1	0
I feel my child likes to write.	1	0
I think my child is a good writer.	1	0
I think writing is important.	0	0
I encourage my child to write at home.	2	0

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Table 26
Parent Survey
Comparing "Sometimes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My child writes at home for pleasure.	8	4
I write at home for pleasure.	8	8
I read what my child writes.	0	0
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	10	12
We share what we write.	3	8
I make corrections on my children's papers.	5	5
I feel my child likes to write.	5	6
I think my child is a good writer.	6	8
I think writing is important.	0	0
I encourage my child to write at home.	0	3

Table 24 through 26 indicates that the parents of the first graders showed an increase of 15% when responding to the statement "My child writes for pleasure at home." A consistency of 100% of the parents responded "yes" to the statement "I think writing is important." When comparing the "no" and "sometimes" responses to the "yes" responses, a significant decrease was made in both areas.

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Table 27
Parent Survey
Comparing "Yes" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My child writes at home for pleasure.	9	10
I write at home for pleasure.	4	2
I read what my child writes.	21	19
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	5	3
We share what we write.	14	9
I make corrections on my children's papers.	12	13
I feel my child likes to write.	11	15
I think my child is a good writer.	12	14
I think writing is important.	21	22
I encourage my child to write at home.	16	16

Table 28
Parent Survey
Comparing "No" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My child writes at home for pleasure.	2	2
I write at home for pleasure.	8	10
I read what my child writes.	0	0
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	4	8
We share what we write.	1	3
I make corrections on my children's papers.	2	1
I feel my child likes to write.	4	1
I think my child is a good writer.	4	3
I think writing is important.	0	0
I encourage my child to write at home.	1	0

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Table 29
Parent Survey
Comparing "Sometimes" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My child writes at home for pleasure.	10	10
I write at home for pleasure.	9	10
I read what my child writes.	0	3
We write stories, letters, etc. together.	12	11
We share what we write.	6	10
I make corrections on my children's papers.	7	8
I feel my child likes to write.	6	6
I think my child is a good writer.	5	5
I think writing is important.	0	0
I encourage my child to write at home.	4	6

Table 27 through 29 indicates the parental responses of the students in the targeted third grade. One hundred percent of the parents think writing is important. An increase of 16% was shown when comparing "yes" responses from September and January to the statement "I feel my child likes to write." A decrease of 27% was shown when responding to the statement "We share what we write." An increase of 17% of the parents responded "no" to the statement "We write stories, letters, etc. together" when comparing September and January. In addition, when comparing September and January, a 16% increase was made in the "sometimes" response "We share what we write."

The parent survey indicated a variety of responses ranging from slight changes to responses that doubled. The number of surveys returned, parents not responding honestly, and different parents taking the survey affected the results. After reviewing the survey results it

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appears there are too many variables to make it a valid tool for research. The parent survey can be used for interest only.

Table 30
Student Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing "Yes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My story makes sense.	11	12
I used capital letters.	10	12
I used periods.	6	11
I used question marks.	na	na
I used exclamation points.	na	na
My story has a title.	12	12
My story has a beginning.	na	11
My story has a middle.	na	12
My story has an ending.	na	8
My story has three or more details.	na	9

na – not applicable at this time

Table 31
Student Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing "No" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My story makes sense.	1	0
I used capital letters.	2	0
I used periods.	6	1
I used question marks.	na	na
I used exclamation points.	na	na
My story has a title.	0	0
My story has a beginning.	na	1
My story has a middle.	na	0
My story has an ending.	na	4
My story has three or more details.	na	3

na – not applicable at this time

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Table 32
Teacher Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing "Yes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My story makes sense.	3	9
I used capital letters.	6	7
I used periods.	2	8
I used question marks.	na	na
I used exclamation points.	na	na
My story has a title.	12	12
My story has a beginning.	na	3
My story has a middle.	na	9
My story has an ending.	na	2
My story has three or more details.	na	7

na - not applicable at this time

Table 33
Teacher Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing "No" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
My story makes sense.	9	3
I used capital letters.	6	5
I used periods.	10	4
I used question marks.	na	na
I used exclamation points.	na	na
My story has a title.	0	0
My story has a beginning.	na	9
My story has a middle.	na	3
My story has an ending.	na	10
My story has three or more details.	na	5

na – not applicable at this time

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Tables 30 through 33 indicate the teacher and students did not agree to any of the statements except "My story has a title." The students and teachers responded "yes" 100% of the time to the statement "My story has a title" when comparing September and January. The data from January shows an equivalent number of "yes" responses from the teacher student checklist. This indicated positive change in the students writing through teacher intervention. The results of these interventions demonstrate that students are taking a proactive approach in being a responsible writer.

Table 34
Student Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Student "Always" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I used capital letters appropriately.	10	10
I used punctuation appropriately.	6	6
I used grammar correctly.	6	8
My writing is clearly stated.	7	8
My writing makes sense.	6	7
My writing has an opening sentence.	7	9
My writing has a closing sentence.	6	9
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	7	8
I used details in my writing.	5	5
I used supporting sentences.	4	3

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Table 35
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Student "Most of the Time" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I used capital letters appropriately.	2	2
I used punctuation appropriately.	6	6
I used grammar correctly.	6	4
My writing is clearly stated.	4	4
My writing makes sense.	5	5
My writing has an opening sentence.	4	3
My writing has a closing sentence.	3	2
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	5	4
I used details in my writing.	5	7
I used supporting sentences.	5	10

Table 36
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Student "Hardly Ever" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I used capital letters appropriately.	0	0
I used punctuation appropriately.	0	0
I used grammar correctly.	0	0
My writing is clearly stated.	1	0
My writing makes sense.	1	0
My writing has an opening sentence.	1	0
My writing has a closing sentence.	3	1
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	0	0
I used details in my writing.	2	0
I used supporting sentences.	3	0

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Table 37
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher "Always" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I used capital letters appropriately.	0	10
I used punctuation appropriately.	0	9
I used grammar correctly.	0	5
My writing is clearly stated.	0	7
My writing makes sense.	0	8
My writing has an opening sentence.	1	9
My writing has a closing sentence.	0	9
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	0	7
I used details in my writing.	0	7
I used supporting sentences.	0	7

Table 38
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher "Most of the Time" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I used capital letters appropriately.	10	2
I used punctuation appropriately.	6	3
I used grammar correctly.	4	7
My writing is clearly stated.	3	5
My writing makes sense.	2	4
My writing has an opening sentence.	8	3
My writing has a closing sentence.	8	3
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	5	5
I used details in my writing.	4	5
I used supporting sentences.	3	5

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Table 39
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher "Hardly Ever" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

	September 2001	January 2002
I used capital letters appropriately.	2	0
I used punctuation appropriately.	6	0
I used grammar correctly.	8	0
My writing is clearly stated.	9	0
My writing makes sense.	10	0
My writing has an opening sentence.	3	0
My writing has a closing sentence.	4	1
My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	7	0
I used details in my writing.	8	0
I used supporting sentences.	9	0

Tables 34 through 39 indicate that in September the teacher and students did not agree on any of the ten statements asked. In comparing the September checklist to the January checklist teacher and students show an equal number of same responses to the statements asked.

The "Always" responses and the "Hardly Ever" responses from September to January indicate a complete turn around of data. The data recorded in the September "Always" responses has been shifted to the January responses of "Hardly Ever."

The increases mentioned in the data are attributed to the intervention approach that supports writing for authentic purposes. This allowed students to internalize and be responsible for their writing through self-evaluation.

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Table 40
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher/Student "Yes" Responses
Grade One
January 2002

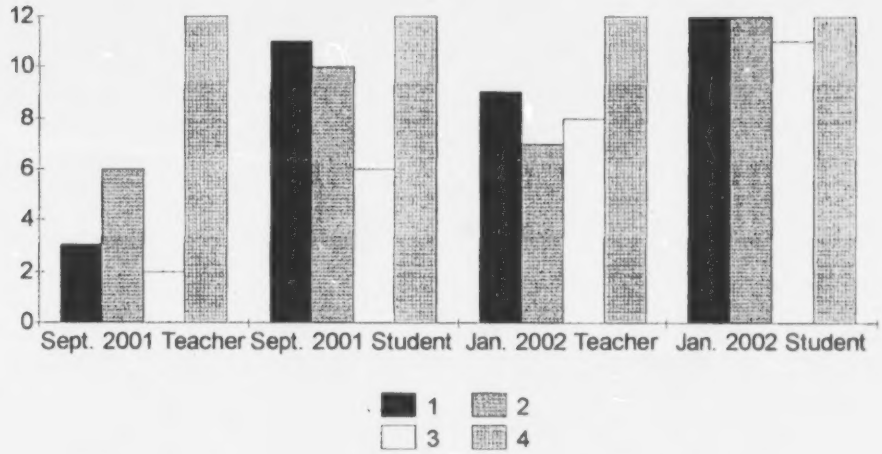
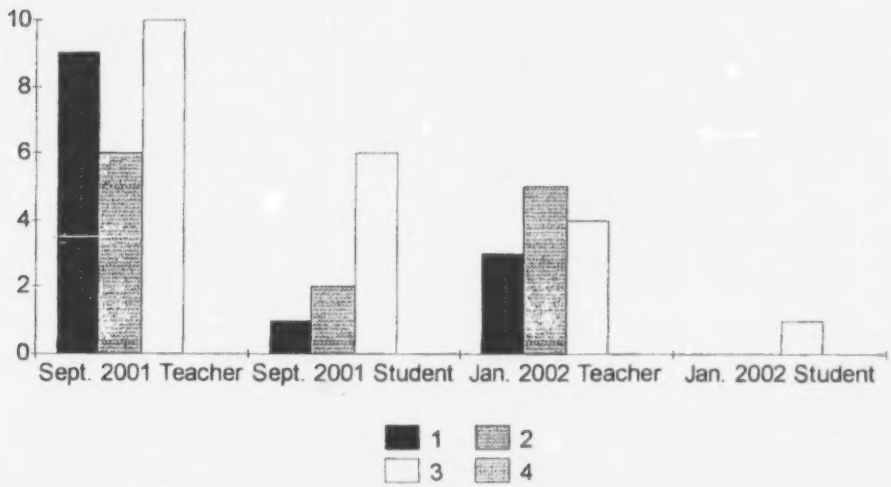


Table 41
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher/Student "No" Responses
Grade One
January 2002



Statements numbers along the horizontal axis in Table 40 and 41 are as follows:

1. My story makes sense.
2. I used capital letters.
3. I used periods.
4. My story has a title.

In Tables 40 and 41the vertical axis shows the number of students/teacher who responded to the statements. Upon examining the "yes" and "no" responses, the researchers concluded there was a major difference in the teacher/student responses in January compared to September. This may be attributed to the students having a clearer understanding of the statements asked.

Table 42
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher/Student "Always" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

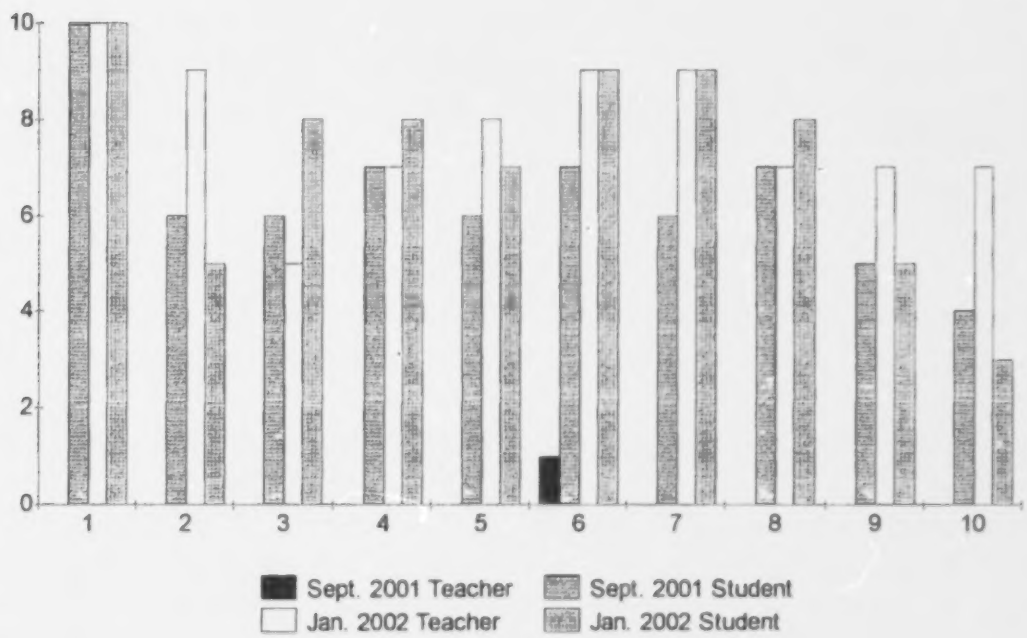


Table 43
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher/Student "Most of the Time" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002

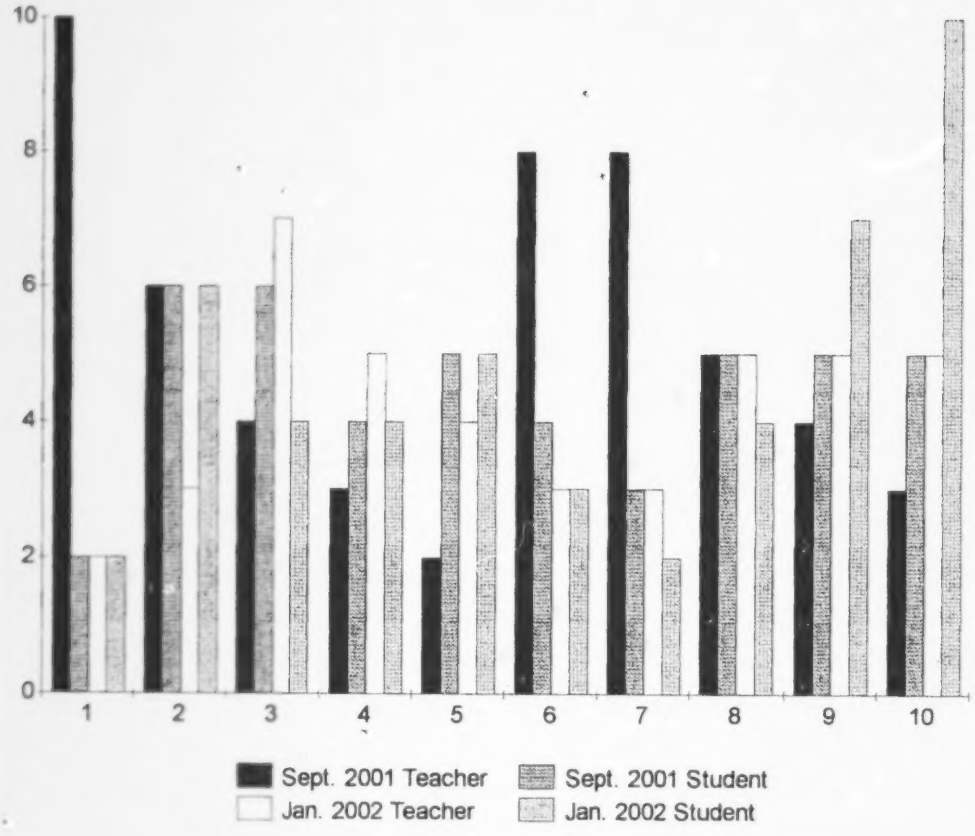


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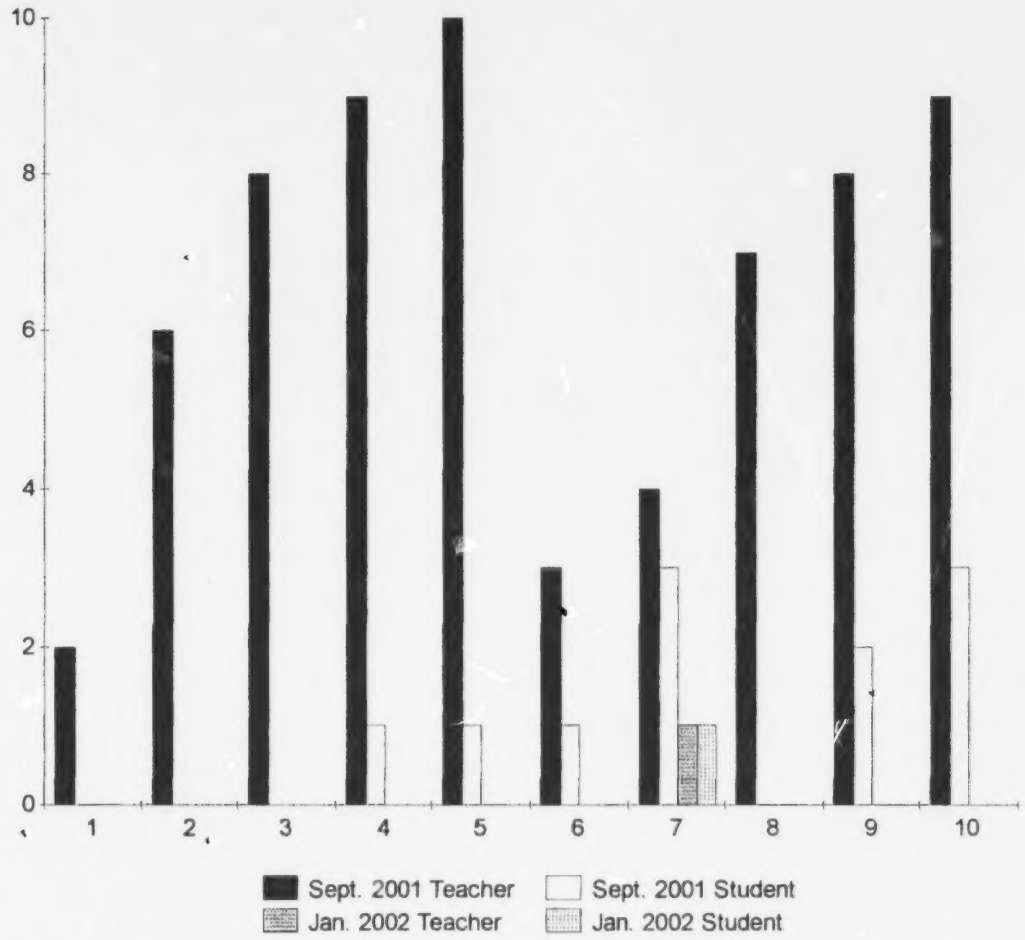
Table 44
Writing Performance Checklist
Comparing Teacher/Student "Hardly Ever" Responses
Grade Three
January 2002



In Table 42 through 44, the numbers long the vertical axis represent the number of teacher/students that responded to the statements. The horizontal axis represents the following statements:

1. I used capital letters appropriately.
2. I used punctuation appropriately.
3. I used grammar correctly.
4. My writing is clearly stated.
5. My writing makes sense.
6. My writing has an opening sentence.
7. My writing has a closing sentence.
8. My paragraphs stick to the same topic.
9. I used details in my writing.
10. I used supporting sentences.

Tables 42 through 44 indicate a positive change in the student and teacher writing performance checklist from September to January. The positive change indicated that the students and teacher have developed an understanding, through intervention, of how structured writing has evolves over time.

Table 45
Daily Oral Language
Class Percentages
Grade One and Grade Three
January 2002

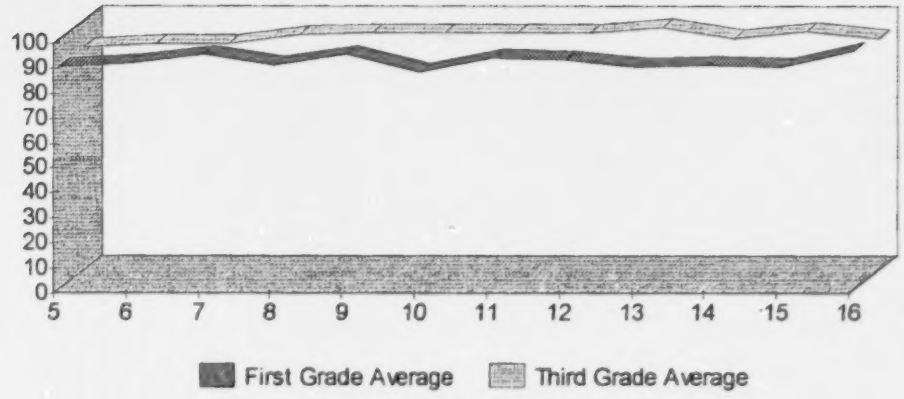


Table 45 indicates independent students' Daily Oral Language percentages over a twelve-week period. The students in the targeted first and third grades show an above average level of consistency. The results of this intervention empowered students to internalize and be responsible for their spelling through editing techniques and self-assessment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the researchers observations and experience, combined with the analysis of the data on student writing improvement, the students showed a substantial increase in their attitude about writing development and transfer of Daily Oral Language into their writing. Students displayed a positive change in attitude toward writing in school as well as at home.

Engaged learning was evident when students were self or peer editing, writing for pleasure, sharing with peers, and sharing with whole group. The use of these interventions was encouraged to create self-correcting writers. The researchers modeled the use of references during mini-lessons. Frequent encouragement was also given to the students. In third grade, student experts were assigned each day to help those that needed it.

The researchers found the interventions to be successful enough to continue using with some modifications. One modification is the use of the surveys. The researchers found the surveys used in this intervention were inadequate and did not provide the researcher with individual student data. The surveys offered general, but not specific information to properly assess students' strengths and weaknesses. The researchers suggest the development of a specific criteria checklist to monitor individual student progress. Comparing these checklists would give teachers a clearer understanding of the student's developmental level.

Another modification is the time restraints. The researchers concluded time restraints, rigid scheduling, and school interruptions play an enormous role in allowing enough time to write and energy to conference with students on a daily basis. The researchers suggest writing across the curriculum to encourage writing in other subject areas. Writing across the curriculum offers additional time for writing. The researchers also suggest daily journal writing and an uninterrupted writing block, no matter how minimal the time. Being consistent and allowing enough writing time is very important.

The last modification is conferencing. The researchers had good intentions of daily conferencing. Curriculum and time restraints made this virtually impossible. The researchers suggest, as an option, peer conferencing or encouraging student mentoring from different grade levels. The researchers also suggest teachers act as sounding boards, walk around the room

listening to students, and asking appropriate questions to guide and prompt students when necessary. In conclusion, the teachers are planning on providing a portfolio night for parents and community members to showcase our classroom authors and their portfolios. Author's awards will be given to all the students to celebrate their accomplishments (Appendix O).

The researchers approach toward writing has changed dramatically. They are motivated by their students' energy and attitudes toward writing. The students' positive attitude and upbeat spirit has driven the teachers with a desire to find new and motivating ideas using literature, videos, audio tapes and community, state or world events. The teachers no longer have fear of teaching writing or the challenges of a new project. There is a charge of energy in the writing classroom from the students positive comment such as: "I want to write," "Can I make another book," "I wrote this at home, can I share it with the class, and "I know that I am sick, but I need to stay for Writer's Workshop." The students are very encouraging to the teachers and to each other. Students are taking ownership of their work and their voices are coming through loud and clear. Phrases such as "I don't know what to write," "I don't know how to begin," and "I don't have anything to say" are no longer heard in the classroom. The students in the targeted first and third grades have plenty to say and the teachers want to hear every word!

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Appendices

Appendix A
First Grade Writing Questionnaire

1. I like to write.

2. I find it easy to write.

3. I like to write in school.

4. I like to write at home.

5. I am proud of what I write.

6. What kind of writer do you think you are?

Appendix B

Third Grade Writing Questionnaire

1. I like to write.

2. I find it easy to write.

3. I think writing is important.

4. I like to write at school.

5. I like to write at home.

6. I am proud of what I write.

7. I am good at putting my ideas on paper.

8. Writing helps me tell what I learned.

9. I am able to revise my writing.

10. I write different types of stories.

11. What kind of writer do you think you are?

a. a great writer

b. a good writer

c. an average writer

d. a poor writer

Appendix C

Parent Survey

1. My child writes at home for pleasure.	yes	no	sometimes
2. I write at home for pleasure.	yes	no	sometimes
3. I read what my child writes.	yes	no	sometimes
4. We write stories, letters, etc. together.	yes	no	sometimes
5. We share what we write.	yes	no	sometimes
6. I make corrections on my children's writing.	yes	no	sometimes
7. I think my child likes to write.	yes	no	sometimes
8. I think my child is a good writer.	yes	no	sometimes
9. I think writing is important.	yes	no	sometimes
10. I encourage my child to write at home.	yes	no	sometimes

Name (optional) _____

Appendix D

First Grade Student Writing Performance Checklist

Student Number _____ Date _____

1. My story makes sense.	yes	no
2. I used capital letters.	yes	no
periods	yes	no
question marks	yes	no
exclamation points	yes	no
3. My story has a title.	yes	no
4. My story has a beginning.	yes	no
5. My story has a middle.	yes	no
6. My story has an ending.	yes	no
7. My story has 3 or more details.	yes	no

Appendix E

Third Grade Student Writing Performance Checklist

Student Number _____ Date _____

	Always	Most of the time	Hardly ever
1. I used capital letters appropriately.	1	2	3
2. I used punctuation appropriately.	1	2	3
3. I used grammar correctly.	1	2	3
4. My writing topic is clearly stated.	1	2	3
5. My writing makes sense.	1	2	3
6. My writing has an opening sentence.	1	2	3
7. My writing has a closing sentence.	1	2	3
8. My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	1	2	3
9. I used details in my writing.	1	2	3
10. I used supporting sentences.	1	2	3

Appendix F

First Grade Teacher Writing Performance Checklist

Student Number _____ Date _____

1. My story makes sense.	yes	no
2. I used capital letters.	yes	no
periods	yes	no
question marks	yes	no
exclamation points	yes	no
3. My story has a title.	yes	no
4. My story has a beginning.	yes	no
5. My story has a middle.	yes	no
6. My story has an ending.	yes	no
7. My story has 3 or more details.	yes	no

Appendix G

Third Grade Teacher Writing Performance Checklist

Student Number _____ Date _____

	Always	Most of the time	Hardly ever
1. I used capital letters appropriately.	1	2	3
2. I used punctuation appropriately.	1	2	3
3. I used grammar correctly.	1	2	3
4. My writing topic is clearly stated.	1	2	3
5. My writing makes sense.	1	2	3
6. My writing has an opening sentence.	1	2	3
7. My writing has a closing sentence.	1	2	3
8. My paragraphs stick to the same topic.	1	2	3
9. I used details in my writing.	1	2	3
10. I used supporting sentences.	1	2	3

Appendix H
Daily Oral Language

D.O.L.

student #	week	week	week	week	week	week	week
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
average							

Appendix I
First Grade Writing Checklist

Writing checklist

- ☐ My name is on my paper.
- ☐ I started each sentence with a capital letter.
- ☐ I used . ? ! correctly.
- ☐ I checked my spelling.
- ☐ I read my work and it makes sense.
- ☐ I did my best!

Appendix J
First Grade Checklist

Name: _____

My Checklist

	Student	Teacher
1. Name of work		
2. Starts with a Capital		
3. Finger space		
4. End mark . ? !		
My work is		

Appendix K
Third Grade Self-Editing Checklist

Name_____ Date_____
Title of my piece_____

Editing Checklist

_____1. I've shared my piece and made changes.
_____2. I've checked for periods.
_____3. I've checked for capital letters.
_____4. I've corrected my spelling.

Author's comments:

Task to learn:

Appendix L
Third Grade Peer Editing Checklist

Name_____ Date_____
I conferred with_____

Peer Editing

Before you confer, be sure to have thought about and checked off each of these points.

_____1. Does all my information belong in this story or should some be crossed out?
_____2. I have checked all grammar errors.
_____3. I have used detail and elaboration.

_____

During this peer revising and editing conference, I want to work on:

_____Title	**_____Spelling**
_____Organization	**_____Capitals**
_____Ending	**_____Sentence Endings**

Appendix M
Books, Videos

Books

Dr. Seuss by Wendy Lynch is a factual story about Dr. Seuss and what his life was like. This story was used to encourage students about writing and becoming an author.

The Giant Jam Sandwich by John Vernon Lord is a story about a town plagued with wasps. The town's people pulled together creating a house size jam sandwich, luring the wasps to get stuck between the jam and bread. This story was used to help students visualize the illustrations and develop sequence in their own sandwich story.

Sam's Sandwich by David Pelham is a story about a boy named Sam who wants to put some surprising extras on his sister's sandwich. This story was used to help motivate student creativity.

Spooky Spells by Grandreams is a scary pop-up book about magic potions, Halloween characters, and magic spells. This story was used to inspire student writing for the "Witch's Brew" story.

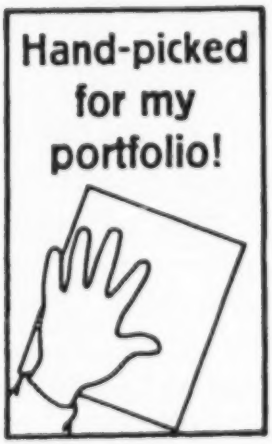
Video

Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat* video. This video is the animated musical version of Dr. Seuss' most famous book. This video provided a comparison between books and videos.

Appendix N
Portfolio Reward Patches

Portfolio Paper "Clips"

Reproduce these designs on oaktag or construction paper for children to color and cut out. Laminate if possible for greater durability. Print each child's name on four spring-type clothespins and glue to the back of their colored designs. Use to hold or display portfolio work.



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